

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 24 October 1978 CG NIDC 78/248



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DIA review(s) completed.

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 24 October 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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SYRIA-IRAQ: Assad in Baghdad

25X1 [] Syrian President Assad will arrive in Iraq today in an effort to end the bitter feud between the two Baathist governments. He will discuss longstanding bilateral differences, as well as the means to build an effective opposition to the Camp David accords and establish Syrian-Iraqi military cooperation. If the Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation is cemented, the way will be paved for the Arab foreign ministers' conference scheduled to open in Baghdad next Monday.

25X1 [] Assad's visit to Baghdad is his first in five years--he traveled secretly to Iraq after the 1973 war--and the first public Syrian-Iraqi summit in 15 years. Extensive contacts between the two sides since late last month laid the basis for the meeting.

25X1 [] //Assad will reportedly urge Iraqi strongman Saddam Husayn to coordinate Iraq's policy against the Camp David accords with Syria, and the two leaders will probably try to formulate a joint strategy for the Arab summit conference scheduled for early next month in the hope of persuading Arab moderates to denounce the Camp David agreements and exert pressure on Egypt.//

25X1 [] While the Syrian-Iraqi summit talks may yet founder over the thorny issues that have divided the two regimes, we expect that some papering over of the feud will occur. Both sides seem to recognize that they cannot mount a realistic challenge to the Camp David accords unless they work together.

25X1 [] To secure Iraqi support for Syria and to improve Damascus' credibility toward Israel, Assad may be willing to accept a limited Iraqi troop deployment inside Syria, but he will keep a close watch on the Iraqis to ensure that they do not threaten his hold on power, and we doubt that he will give Iraq any real control over Syrian decisionmaking.

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[redacted] [redacted] 25X1
DIA

[redacted] Syrians would permit Iraqi forces into Syria only if they were completely under Syrian command--a condition that has been unacceptable to Iraq in the past. [redacted]

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[redacted] Syria may agree to form a symbolic joint military command that might provide a compromise in order to placate Iraq.// [redacted]

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LEBANON: Changing Attitudes

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[redacted] Lebanese Maronite leader Camille Shamun has modified some of his recent criticism of US policy toward Lebanon and the use of Saudi troops in East Beirut. Another Maronite leader has, for the first time, criticized Israel's policy in Lebanon.

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[redacted] In a press conference on Friday, Shamun said that, despite some differences, "an atmosphere of understanding" marks his relations with the US. Shamun had sharply criticized US policy last week.

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[redacted] Although Shamun has frequently stated his opposition in recent weeks to the introduction of new troops from any Arab country, he welcomed the presence of Saudi Arabian troops in some areas of East Beirut as replacements for Syrian units. He called for additional Syrian withdrawals and said he still prefers that all foreign troops leave Lebanon. Phalange militia chief Bashir Jumayyil, another Maronite militant, also said recently that he would try to maintain the truce so that a search for political solutions could begin.

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[redacted] In a press interview last week, Phalangist Amin Jumayyil criticized Israel's role in Lebanon and accused the Israelis of destroying the Lebanese economy. This was the first public criticism of Israel by a leading Phalangist since Tel Aviv began aiding the Maronites in 1976.

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[redacted] These statements may indicate that the Maronites are having second thoughts about the wisdom of their policy of provoking the Syrians in the hope that Syrian reaction will lead to UN or Israeli intervention. The militants may have decided

to show restraint for now because they do not want to appear to be unreasonable at a time when the Syrians have made some concessions, the UN has sponsored a cease-fire, and the US and France have strongly urged continued observance of the truce.

25X1 [] President Sarkis' official request--delivered to the Arab league on Sunday--for a renewal of the Arab Deterrent Force mandate, which expires on Thursday, will provide a test of the militants' willingness to observe the cease-fire; the last round of heavy fighting began shortly after Sarkis had publicly indicated that he would request renewal of the mandate.

25X1 [] The cabinet's decision on Saturday to order courts martial for Majors Haddad and Shidiak, the commanders of the Christian militias in southern Lebanon, will antagonize the Maronites. The two officers have been under only nominal Army command since the civil war in 1975 and 1976, and they cooperate closely with Israel. [] 25X1

ISRAEL-EGYPT: Energy and the Sinai

25X1 [] *//The return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt will make Israel almost totally dependent on imported oil for its energy needs, at least for the next several years. Israel will probably try to negotiate access, at preferential prices, to some of the oil and gas it has discovered in the Sinai. Oil purchases from Egypt would save Israel money on transportation costs and would symbolize a major change in political relations.//*

25X1 [] *//Last year, Israel discovered an oil-producing area off the Sinai that will save it \$20 million in foreign exchange this year and could have supplied most of its oil needs by the early 1980s, saving it about \$500 million a year. A gas find in the northern Sinai could also have filled Israel's current industrial demand for natural gas.//*

25X1 [] *//Under the terms of a peace treaty, Israel may have to pay reparations to Egypt for the 2.9 million barrels of oil extracted thus far this year. Israel may claim a share of the area's mineral resources because of its discovery and exploration efforts, but Egypt has consistently protested--with formal US support--that such Israeli development is illegal.//*

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[] //If Israel started to import much of its oil from the Sinai, a future cutoff of this oil would not pose a major security problem. Substitute supplies probably could be obtained elsewhere, most likely from Iran and Mexico, Israel's major current suppliers. Israel could in any case operate for at least seven months by rationing stockpiled oil.//

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[] //Israel is searching for various alternatives to reduce dependence on imported oil. Coal-fired electrical generating plants are already under construction and should provide about 40 percent of Israel's electrical power needs by 1983. Coal for these plants would be cheaper to import than oil and would come from the US, South Africa, and Australia--countries traditionally friendly toward Israel.//

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[] //Other efforts, such as a government oil conservation policy and funding of research and development of nonoil energy sources, are not likely to bring about a major reduction in oil demand before the late 1980s. []

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NORTH YEMEN: Political Problems

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[] //North Yemeni President Salih, the target of an unsuccessful coup in mid-October, has strengthened his position in the short run by purging dissidents, but the regime remains basically weak and vulnerable. There is a widespread feeling in North Yemen that the conservative Salih is only an interim president.//

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[] //The participation of some North Yemeni military units in the coup plot puts in question the loyalty of the officer corps. If Salih overreacts, he could even further reduce the efficiency of the country's military and produce new discontent.// Many Yemenis, particularly Baathists, leftists, and sympathizers with South Yemen, probably share at least some of the grievances of the coup plotters.

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[] Salih, moreover, lacks the personality and the flair that might help him build a political following. He is not a member of North Yemen's traditional power structure and is looked down upon by many who belong to it. Salih is widely believed to have participated in the assassination of popular President al-Hamdi a year ago.

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[REDACTED] //Salih may be able to outmaneuver domestic left-ists, but it is questionable whether he will get the time--or is skilled enough--to address the country's divisive problems of localism, tribal rivalries, and slow economic growth.//

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[REDACTED] //We have no firm evidence of any current moves in the North Yemeni military to unseat Salih, but there probably are officers who consider themselves better suited to running the government.// [REDACTED]

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BRIEFS



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France-UN

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[REDACTED] //Despite US efforts to dissuade them, the French intend to introduce at the current session of the UN General Assembly a draft resolution calling for a study on establishing an international agency under UN auspices to monitor by satellite compliance with arms control agreements.//

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[REDACTED] //The French disarmament initiative presented last January contained such a proposal. Because the proposal had not been developed in depth, however, and because it received a lukewarm Western response, the French have not pushed hard for it. After their own review, they now assert that it would be feasible to monitor certain types of arms limitation agreements without resorting to the more advanced reconnaissance capabilities of US and Soviet systems.//

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[REDACTED] //French Senator Taittinger, his government's principal proponent of the disarmament initiative, may introduce the draft resolution in New York this week. The French acknowledge that an international verification agency is not a near-term prospect but maintain that the groundwork for the agency must be built. [REDACTED] //

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UNESCO

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[REDACTED] The UN Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization begins today what may be its most divisive General Conference since 1974, when it barred Israeli participation in the European regional group. That act led to a temporary suspension of US dues, which account for 25 percent of the overall budget. Many of the less developed countries may underestimate the adverse impact that adoption of their new proposals would have on the attitude toward UNESCO of industrialized nations in general and US public and Congressional opinion in particular.

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[] The most significant issue at the 20th General Conference will be the introduction of the final draft of a declaration on mass media that sanctions government control of domestic media and permits regulation of local correspondents of foreign news media. Significant opposition to the current draft exists among industrialized nations, although most Third World countries strongly support it.

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[] Other contentious topics that may receive more immediate attention are rooted in the Arab-Israeli conflict. They include a report from the UNESCO Director General on Israel archeological excavations in Jerusalem; a similar report on educational and cultural institutions in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories; and an attempt to amend the current draft of the Race and Racial Prejudice Declaration to include a linkage between Zionism and racism. []

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USSR

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[] The Soviets are negotiating with a US company for the development of a research and training facility capable of simulating dives to depths of 1,000 meters--more than three times the known current commercial and military operational capability of any country. The Soviets will probably use the new facility, which should be operational around 1985, to train divers, to develop experimental diving systems, and to perform physiological research for more efficient diver pressurization-depressurization tables.

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[] If the USSR cannot obtain the technology from the US, it can probably get it from France or Sweden. []

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